

The Underground Press

A new group of communist-financed newspapers is now in the forefront of the onslaught on our Republic

By JOHN L. KENT

IT HAS NOW BEEN nearly forty years since H. L. Mencken, the co-founder and editor of THE AMERICAN MERCURY was arrested and led off to jail for selling a copy of an issue which ran a short story about a prostitute.

Perhaps the America of forty years ago was a little too squeamish about the facts of life. Prostitutes do exist. Mencken was noted for his iconoclastic criticism of many American customs. Hiding the facts of life was not to his liking. However, he would be appalled at the "unveiling" of the facts of life as it is practiced in today's journals—particularly in those known collectively as the "underground press."

The underground press is a collection of some 150 newspapers and magazines aimed at young people. Most of them have been launched during the past four years and their rise has coincided with the rise in hippiedom, anarchism on campus, dope addiction among the young, and the fantastic growth of pornographic books and movies.

The periodicals — some weeklies, some monthlies—have both a newsstand distribution and mail subscribers. They are reputed to have a total circulation of close to two million copies per issue.

The underground press is the Nation's leading purveyor of pornography and subversion. The editors and writers are completely anti-Establishment, anti-American and basically anti-civilization. They promote the hedonistic, anarchistic "now" world of the "Pepsi and marijuana generation."

Reason for Existence

Any reasonable person should be able to get a reasonable reply to his question: What has caused this tremendous growth of the underground press? But in dealing with the underground press you are dealing with relatively "unreasonable" things. First of all, the

underground press is completely irresponsible. There is no delineation between truth and lies, between fact and opinion, between news and propaganda. By common, everyday standards of civilized people, the underground press is outrageous, often obscene, generally anti-culture, and invariably anti-American.

The editors and publishers say that they are growing in circulation because today's youth has lost faith in the "Establishment press" which is scored as militaristic, profit-oriented, and in 100% support of the economic system which "feeds and fattens on profits largely the product of other people's suffering."

Of course the underground press has its supporters and its apologists. Many of the latter come from the academic world and they praise the dissidents' exercise of free speech and free press.

Most Americans have a somewhat different idea of what free speech and free press means. According to one apologist, those who write for the underground papers "are intensely dissatisfied with the society they have inherited. They see sham and hypocrisy in every middle-class gesture, and too often come up with painful examples that seem to prove what they envision."

Another apologist says: "When you think about it, the underground newspapers are rebelling, and in much the same way the colonies did in 1776. They disagree with the modern political and social spectrum, and have chosen to alienate themselves from the mother-society most of them sprang from." This apologist obviously knows little about the American Revolution. The colonists may have been in rebellion, but they did not alienate themselves from the mother country. In fact almost all of the major revolutionists engaged in long drawn out discussion and debates over the merits of the colonies' complaints. Unlike the dissident youth of today, they were willing to talk

nothing.

The extreme youth of the people in charge is a major characteristic of the underground press. Another is a callous disregard for possible consequences — the apologists call it "gutsiness" — of their exercise of free press. To most people this gutsiness would appear to be total irresponsibility.

While the urge to edit and publish a paper to make one's views known is not unusual among the young, the continued existence of many papers despite lack of readership is due to communist support. This is the more sinister reason for the existence of the underground press. It is a vehicle of the International Communist conspiracy. This fact can be ascertained by reading only a single issue of any of the underground papers.

Communist Financing

Many of the earlier papers were amateur efforts of the more literate members of the hippie generation. The hippies' cause was basically anti-Establishment in all respects, although it masqueraded under such slogans as "Peace" and "Love." They were anti-parent, anti-middle class, anti-American. Since nothing is perfect in any political system, they had many targets in the United States on which to vent their dissatisfaction. The writers and editors lashed out against the "dollar-worshipping, machine-managed, jungle-bombing America" with the wrath of the Biblical prophets.

Many of the editors and writers possessed more spleen than writing talent and as a result some of the papers failed to gather enough audience among the disenchanted youth and folded. But other papers and magazines sprang up and by 1968 estimates were that the circulation was over one million and readership about four times that much.

Despite the editors' amateurisms, the publications were making an impact on

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